

## Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07

FMC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 SAL-01 CG-00 DLOS-04 OES-06

AID-05 /041 W

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R 201130Z MAY 76

FM AMCONSUL DURBAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2188

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

UNCLAS DURBAN 0189

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, SF

SUBJECT: DURBAN HARBOR HIT BY U.S. CONGESTION SURCHARGE

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

1. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE MAY 19 OF DECISION BY U.S./SOUTH AND EAST AFRICA SHIPPING CONFERENCE TO IMPOSE TEN PER CENT DURBAN PORT DETENTION SURCHARGE EFFECTIVE JUNE 12 ON ALL INCOMING AND OUTGOING CARGO FROM ALL AMERICAN ATLANTIC AND GULF PORTS. ANNOUNCEMENT FROM NEW YORK CITED "EXTRAORDINARY DELAYS" IN HANDLING SHIPS AT DURBAN AS CAUSE OF SURCHARGE. OTHER SA PORTS ARE NOT CURRENTLY AFFECTED BY US CONFERENCE DECISION. LOCAL SOURCES, INCLUDING US SHIPPING REPRESENTATIVES, HAVE INDICATED THERE MAY BE SOME "GIVE" IN US CONFERENCE DECISION IF CONDITIONS AT DURBAN SHOULD SUBSEQUENTLY IMPROVE. BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN CONFERENCE MEANWHILE ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD NOT INTRODUCE A SURCHARGE AT DURBAN.

2. SURCHARGE DECISION DREW SHARP REACTION LOCALLY INCLUDING STATEMENT BY SA RAILWAYS & HARBORS (SAR&H) REPRESENTATIVE  
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THAT DECISION IS "UNJUSTIFIED", "UNFAIR", AND WILL RESULT ONLY

IN CLOGGING OF ADJACENT PORTS OF PORT ELIZABETH AND EAST LONDON BY SHIPPERS ATTEMPTING TO AVOID DURBAN. CHAIRMAN OF (SA) ASSOCIATION OF SHIPPING LINES IN TURN ASCRIBED SOME OF PORT CONGESTION BLAME TO SA RAILWAYS BUT EXPRESSED BELIEF SITUATION WOULD BE BROUGHT RIGHT WITH EMPLOYMENT OF MORE CRANE DRIVERS AND LABORERS. (PROMINENT MENTION WAS MADE OF SAR&H INTRODUCTION OF BLACK CRANE DRIVERS TO AMPLIFY HERETOFORE MOSTLY-WHITE SKILLED WORKFORCE.) DURBAN' S PORT DIRECTOR (LOMBARD) STATED THAT HE DID NOT REGARD THE CURRENT CONGESTION AS SERIOUS AND WAS CONFIDENT THAT DELAYS COULD BE REDUCED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

3. DURBAN'S CURRENT CONGESTION PROBLEM STARTED AT THE BEGINNING OF 1976 AND HAS CONTINUED DESPITE REPEATED FORECASTS OF IMMINENT IMPROVEMENT. AS OF MAY 20 THERE ARE 65 SHIPS IN PORT (59 OCEAN-GOING AND SIX COASTERS); TYPICALLY THERE ARE BETWEEN 15-20 SHIPS AT OUTER ANCHORAGE AWAITING BERTHS. LONGEST DELAY FOR AMSHIP WAITING TO ENTER HARBOR HAS BEEN 177 HOURS; AVERAGE DELAY IS 75 HOURS. MANY FACTORS HAVE COMBINED TO PRODUCE CURRENT CONGESTION, INCLUDING BAD WEATHER, SHORTAGE OF SKILLED CRANE OPERATIVES, AND CONGESTION IN SHEDS DUE TO FACT IMPORTERS, IN VIEW OF CURRENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, ARE SLOW TO TAKE DELIVERY OF ARRIVED SHIPMENTS. SA RAILWAY CONGESTION IS ALSO A FACTOR. WHILE WE CANNOT QUANTIFY TO WHAT EXTENT RE-ROUTING OF RHODESIAN OR MAPUTO-BOUND CARGO CONTRIBUTES TO CURRENT CONGESTION, LOCAL BELIEF IS THAT THIS IS ALSO AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FACTOR.

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